

**REMARKS/RESPONSE**

Claims 1-16 are pending. Claims 1 and 4 have been amended herein. Claims 5, 7, 8, 9 and 10 have been cancelled. As set forth more fully below, reconsideration and withdrawal of the Examiner's rejections of the claims 1-6 are respectfully requested.

**Claim Rejections – 35 USC § 102**

The Examiner has rejected claims 1-6 under 35 USC 102(e) as being anticipated by Slettedal (CA 1,279,883). Specifically, the Examiner states:

"The top drive assembly is met by top drive assembly 22, which is located in a drilling mast of a drilling rig shown specifically in Fig. 9. The step of "raising or lowering the top assembly above a platform on the drilling rig to a predetermined position" is anticipated by Fig. 9, and page 4 lines 13+, where the top drive assembly is raised or lifted to a specific position by a traveling block and wireline arrangement. The quill of the top drive assembly is met by the drive shaft 34, which is rotatably connected to a joint of pipe. The step of moving a joint of pipe to a second predetermined position having box end to the top drive assembly is anticipated by Fig. 9 and page 7, lines 7-15, where the top drive assembly is tilted to align with the joint of pipe, while the clamps 7 secure the pipe 34 is pulled close to the drive shaft 10 for connection by the drive shaft is rotating (page 7, lines 19+). The step of raising of the top drive to a nearly vertical orientation and pulling the joint of pipe up into the drilling mast is anticipated by Fig. 9, and page 7, lines 21-27."

In response, the applicant has amended claim 1 to more clearly distinguish the present invention from that of Slettedal. Slettedal teaches a drilling device 22 that is

lowered until it is substantially horizontal. Pipe 10 is positioned on table 25 in a horizontal orientation and is advanced towards drilling device 22 by belt 31. (See page 7, lines 1 to 7 and Figures 1 and 9). The connection between drilling device 22 and pipe 10 is made when pipe 10 is horizontal. After the connection is made, pipe 10 is lifted to a vertical position by strongback 4.

In contrast, the method of the present invention includes the step of raising a joint of pipe with a pipe launcher to a second predetermined position such that the pipe is positioned at a predetermined angle whereby the pipe is aligned with the quill of the top drive unit for connection thereto. The angle is determined by the height of the drilling platform and the distance between the pipe launcher and the drilling rig. This is set out in paragraphs [0009] and [0039] and shown in Figures 3, 4 and 4a in the application as filed. Accordingly, claim 1 has been amended to include these features to distinguish the invention from Slettedal. In doing so, it is submitted that claim 1, as amended, is no longer anticipated by Slettedal and is now in a condition for allowance. As claims 2 and 3 are dependent on claim 1 as amended, it is submitted that these claims are now in a condition for allowance.

In respect of claim 4, claim 4 is the base claim for claims 7 to 10 which the Examiner has stated that would be allowed if amended to include the features of base claim 4. In response, the applicant has amended claim 4 to include the features of claim 5 and claims 7 to 10. Accordingly, it is submitted that claim 4 is no longer anticipated by Slettedal and is now in a condition for allowance.

Claim 6 is dependent on claim 4 as amended. As claim 4 has been amended to address the Examiner's objections, it is submitted that claim 6 is no longer anticipated by Slettedal and is in a condition for allowance.

\* \* \* \* \*

CLAIM FEE CALCULATION

| Claims Remaining After Amendment |    | Highest No. Previously Paid For | Present Extra | Small Entity Rate |   | Additional Fee |
|----------------------------------|----|---------------------------------|---------------|-------------------|---|----------------|
| Total Claims                     | 10 | 20                              | -0-           | x \$ 25           | = | -0-            |
| Indep. Claims                    | 3  | 3                               | -0-           | x \$ 100          | = | -0-            |
| TOTAL .....                      |    |                                 |               |                   |   | \$ -0-         |

X No additional fee is payable in connection with this amendment, since the total number of independent and dependent claims has been reduced or remain the same after entry of this amendment.

**CONCLUSION**

The Examiner has objected to claims 7-10 as being dependent on a rejected base claim but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and intervening claims. As noted above, the applicant has amended claim 4 to include the features of claims 5 and 7-10 and has cancelled claims 5 and 7-10. The applicant repeats its submissions that claim 4 is now in a condition for allowance.

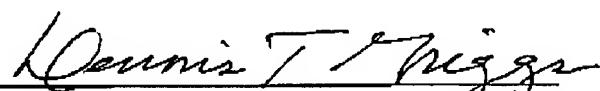
The Examiner has allowed claims 11-16. The applicant is grateful for this disposition.

Accordingly, in view of the above amendments and remarks, it is submitted that all the pending claims are now in a condition for allowance and such disposition is respectfully requested.

If in the opinion of the Examiner, a telephone conference would expedite the prosecution of the subject application, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned attorney at 972-447-4569.

Respectfully submitted,

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Dennis T. Griggs  
Registration No. 27,790  
Attorney for Applicant

Griggs Bergen LLP  
17950 Preston Road, Suite 1000  
Dallas, Texas 75252  
(972) 447-4569